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RUEHTL/AMEMBASSY TALLINN 0006
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 3211
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SUBJECT: HAITI ENGAGEMENT - REPORT FROM HELSINKI

REF: STATE 5277

¶1. PAS has engaged with Finnish government and media on Haiti relief operations and is pleased to report that their treatment of the earthquake and its aftermath has been fair, balanced and forward-leaning in terms of their own support and understanding. We have seen no need to flag highly-biased reporting or instances of misinformation with media directors. In the case of criticism of the efficacy of the U.S. response in Haiti from Finn Church Aid (FCA) -- specifically, the FCA Director and another rep attacking the U.S. military's role and an airdrop of humanitarian assistance in the media -- we expressed our concern directly to him. He acknowledged that perhaps he'd been too critical, given that he offered to have the U.S. response mentioned specifically, publicly and positively at a concert at the National Cathedral last Sunday. He said that he'd received some pointed criticism from Finns after his interview was published, who complained about the harshness of his comments and the positive effect of U.S. relief efforts.

¶2. All major Finnish radio, TV, and print media outlets have reporters filing directly from Port au Prince and day-by-day coverage of events from Haiti has been wide-ranging and accurate. Commentators have focused on the challenging difficulties ahead in terms of logistics to provide aid and dealing with an already impoverished country. Somber assessments and even pessimism regarding the sustainability of international relief have appeared, but nothing to suggest inaccurate views of U.S. operations. Some criticisms of U.S. military presence in Haiti were picked up from international wires, as were reports of organizational snafus and failures of supplies reaching the majority of earthquake victims in a timely fashion. These were broadly balanced with coverage of massive amounts of aid pouring in and heroic survival stories.

¶3. Post's outreach initiatives have included postings of usa.gov materials on our website; dissemination of Haiti info links to key contacts in media and GoF; responses to queries about the Bush-Clinton Fund; an ambassadorial blog and web entry noting Finns' and Americans outpouring of support for Haitians; preparation of bullets on USG Haiti relief efforts for Emboffs' speech files and addresses to schools, a political party and other youth groups, and other public fora; and plans for a U.S. speaker on emergency preparedness with a focus on Haiti.

¶4. Post will continue to monitor all local media sources and flag any distortions. Finns themselves are

extremely attentive to misinformation and sensationalistic reporting; they have a tradition of low-key, reflective media analysis which, in this case, works to our advantage.

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